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. ON NARCOTICS.

FROM LECTURES ON MATERIA MEDICA, BY G. G. SIGMOND, M.D., LONDON.

THESE medicines are distinguished from all others by the specific action which they exercise upon the cerebro-spinal system, but more especially upon the brain, to which, quickly after they are taken into any part of the system, they are conveyed by the bloodvessels. They closely assimilate in their general action, according to the nature of each individual substance and the quantity which may be applied, though considerable differences occur in their individual capacity. Although in their greatest state of intensity, the result of their action is so instantaneous that the progress is scarcely to be watched, in their general operation we observe three stages consecutive to each other; first, an acceleration of arterial blood to the brain; secondly, a venous retardation there; thirdly, an engorgement of the circulatory system in that organ; the first stage being marked by the increased energy of the functions, corporeal and intellectual; the second stage exhibiting their disordered state; and the last stage their temporary suspension.

A familiar illustration of these three consequences may be observed in the state of intoxication from a diffusible stimulus, alcohol, which is classed, from its ultimate effects, under the narcotics. During the arterial acceleration produced by alcohol in its various forms, there is an elevation of the faculties and the corporeal powers; this is differently exhibited, and is much dependent upon the source from which the spirit is obtained, and the state in which it is combined. But the ordinary results are—a glow of heat, an increase of the capillary circulation, the cutaneous perspiration more abundant, the respiration performed with ease; the pulse is, consequently, increased in strength and frequency, the animal heat is elevated, the eyes become more than usually expressive, the countenance is lively; as the stimulus is increased, so are the phenomena of excitement; the circulation acquires a febrile rhythm, the functions are exercised with an inordinate energy, the mind keeps pace with the body; mirth, and joy, and gaiety, are awakened, the wit is lively, and the intellect improved; but to this succeed a general languor and sluggishness, nausea, sickness, vomiting, an obscurity or haziness of vision, incoherence of speech, unwonted muscular motion, muscular debility, and incapability of exercising volition; the vision becomes double; vertigo, internal anxiety, and depression of spirits; in the third stage, a peculiar state between stupor and sleep, which has been called somno-

lence, occurs. This is the train of phenomena which mark the diffusible action, and the depressing re-action, of narcotics. Great is the rapidity with which many of these agents are taken into the system; an example of this occurs in æther: when a small quantity is given, in a few minutes it finds its way into the circulation; it acts upon the nervous system almost immediately, and as a proof of the quickness with which it enters into the circulatory system, it is almost instantaneously given forth by the expiration from the lungs, and the whole room is pervaded by its characteristic odor.

In the action of narcotic agents, you must remember that such substances pass not only from the stomach and intestines with an inconceivable rapidity, but that the lining membrane of the lungs and that of the skin, when the epidermis is removed, possess the power of imbibition in a very high degree. When directly introduced into the blood, as in injection into the veins, they act most rapidly. The doctrine that it is by the lymphatics that they are absorbed into the system, and carried to the thoracic duct, has been overthrown by Magendie; and he has satisfactorily shown that the bloodvessels, both arterial and venous, dead or living, great or small, possess the peculiar power of imbibition, which likewise takes place upon every tissue and upon every surface; that a strongly poisonous fluid kills, no matter whether it be placed in the mouth, on the mucous or serous surfaces, or on the denuded skin, and that the rapidity of the imbibition depends upon the quickness of circulation, and also upon the fulness or emptiness of the bloodvessels, upon which circumstances the acceleration or retardation of a narcotic substance depends; the rapidity of imbibition almost surpasses belief.

Magendie relates the case of a curé, who was poisoned almost immediately by the introduction of a morsel of strychnine into a seton. An instance of the rapidity with which alcohol is carried by the bloodvessels to the brain occurred in the Westminster Hospital. A man was taken in dead, who had just drank a quart of gin for a wager. The evidence of death being quite conclusive, he was immediately examined; and within the lateral ventricles of the brain was found a considerable quantity of a limpid fluid, distinctly impregnated with gin, both to the sense of smell and taste, and even to the test of inflammability.

Narcotics have been distributed into sedatives, or substances which have the power of diminishing action, either local or general; into anodynes, which alleviate the pain and sufferings of organs, or of the various tissues of the body; and lastly, into soporifics, or those which produce sleep. The first diminish sensibility, the second communicate ease to the nervous system, and the third give repose to the organs of the body.

From the action they exercise over the cerebro-spinal system, it follows that narcotics influence very considerably all the functions of organs, and new and inordinate actions, or derangements of digestion, of nutrition, and of secretion, follow. Thus they impede the digestive organs, and prevent the sensation of hunger; hence the use of opium by those who are incapable of purchasing sufficient food. Sometimes they obstruct chymification going forward; if taken during a meal the aliment is sometimes rejected, without having undergone the usual change.

Some of them produce constipation, and the large intestines become sluggish, and incapable of obeying the usual stimulus; they lose their habitual power of contraction, and the largest doses of active medicines which should stimulate them to expel their contents are unavailing. Dryness of the mouth, the throat, thirst, which seems to depend upon the loss of power of the mucous membrane, the muscular tissue is deprived of its general sensibility, the cutaneous perspiration is impeded, and the intellectual powers become impaired.

Of all the different classes of medicine we possess, we may fairly consider the narcotics, skilfully, judiciously, and watchfully administered, the most important; and here let me quote the words of the greatest physician this country ever saw, Sydenham. Speaking of the use of laudanum in dysentery, he says, "And here I cannot help mentioning, with gratitude, the goodness of the Supreme Being, who has supplied mankind with opiates for their relief, no other remedy being equally powerful to overcome a great number of diseases, or to eradicate them effectually. This medicine," he continues, "is so necessary an instrument in the hands of a skilful person, that the art of physic would be defective and imperfect without it; and whoever is thoroughly acquainted with its virtues, and the manner of using it, will perform greater things than might be reasonably expected from any single medicine." May I be excused, whilst thus quoting that first of practical men, if I impress upon your minds, if you would excel in your profession, to read and study deeply the works of Thomas Sydenham? They are few in number, but they are an invaluable treasure to the human race.

Other medical men have expressed very similar opinions as to the value of opium. Sylvius prized it so highly as to have declared, that without this drug he would abandon the science of medicine, as holding forth expectations that could never be realized. Fortunately we have not only auxiliaries to opium, but substitutes for it, nay, even in some instances, agents that are to be preferred to it. Hyoscyamus, in affections of the brain, is preferable to opium; belladonna is more efficacious as a local application in painful affections; and conium has a peculiar influence upon the nervous system, by which pain in some of the most sensitive parts is more immediately lulled, as in diseases of the prostate gland, and in cancerous affections. Digitalis, or foxglove, is endowed with a power of controlling the inordinate action of the heart and arteries, and thus alleviating some maladies attended with peculiar distress, and that disordered sensation to which, medically, the term "anxiety" has been most appropriately given. I have some general remarks to make upon the administration of the remedies, first, as to their power of inducing sleep, and then as to their alleviation of pain.

Sleep has been aptly defined the repose of the organs of sense and motion, whilst the functions of the body are still carried on. I know no finer description of its inestimable value to man than what our great dramatic poet has so beautifully given:—

"Sleep, that knits up the ravelled sleeve of care,
The death of each day's life, sore labor's bath,
Balm of hurt minds, great nature's second course,
Chief nourisher in life's feast."

From the connection between the mental and corporeal functions, the tranquillity and quiet given to the body by the absolute suspension of the action of the voluntary muscles during sleep, conduces to the preservation of the intellect, and the healthy state of the system; and sleeplessness, or vigilance, as it has been termed, is one of the most distressing disorders that can afflict us. Not only does it precede, accompany and aggravate many diseases, but it likewise is their cause; the nervous system is overpowered, a train of frightful maladies is induced, and sometimes the seat of reason has been shaken.

Tissot, in his work on the "Diseases of Literary Characters," says, that the aptitude of the brain, to restore by sleep the impaired energies of the functions of the body, may be lost altogether.

Want of sleep is of course a very frequent concomitant of disease, is a most distressing, weakening, and dangerous symptom in a great number of disorders. The causes of morbid irritation which produce and support this dreadful malady are many and complicated, and frequently demand our utmost attention. There are instances on record of sleeplessness the most frightful. Bartholinus has spoken of a case in which hemicrania kept a person awake for three months; it was attended with a melancholy, or hypochondriacal state, which lasted fourteen months. Gooch gives a singular case of an individual who had never known what pure sleep was, even for half an hour, yet he lived to be 73 years of age, and enjoyed a very good state of health. He fell one day into a kind of dozing, which lasted about a quarter of an hour; but even that was not sound, though it was all the slumber he was ever known to have had. On the other hand, there are some narrations of a most singular kind, of individuals sleeping for weeks, months, nay, even for nearly four years, with very little interruption. The most singular case of this kind is to be found in the 24th vol. of the *Philosophical Transactions*, and it is related by a physician, Dr. Oliver, upon whose sagacity the utmost reliance could be placed, and as there was every opportunity of closely examining the circumstances he relates, there can be very little doubt of the truth of the particulars he there states:—

Samuel Chilton, a laborer, aged about 25, residing at Tinsbury, near Bath, was accustomed to fall into a sleep, from which no one could rouse him till after a month's time; on one occasion he fell asleep about the 9th of April; after some days he, remaining in that state, was seen by Mr. Gibs, of Bath, who was sent for; he bled him, blistered, cupped, and scarified him, and used all sorts of external irritating applications, without producing the slightest effect upon him; he appears, however, to have ate, and to have had some evacuation, though no one saw him do either. This was during the first ten weeks; after that period he remained in the same state for seven weeks, during which he made water once, and had one evacuation.

The duration of sleep should be, in manhood, about the fourth or the sixth of the twenty-four hours; children, the younger they are, the more sleep they require; in advanced age there is more watchfulness.

Excess and defect of sleep are equally pernicious to the system, and injurious to the organs.

Obstinate sleeplessness is a malady that preys upon the system, disordering every function; during the darkness, the silence, and the solitude of night, all the causes of conflicting passion, of anxiety, and of corroding feeling, rise up with redoubled energy, and haunt the broken spirit. The heart beats with terrific violence, there is a gnawing about the præcordia, an unnatural glow of heat succeeded by a damp chilliness, involuntary sighing; a sensation of dread and horror creeps over the system; light is most anxiously prayed for, but when it dawns it brings with it no relief. For this sad state, and often do we meet with it, the soothing attention of the medical man can do much, and though perhaps "the drowsy syrups of the East" may not medicine to the mind diseased, still there are numerous dietetic and moral means which relieve this state. Great attention to the diet, to the cutaneous perspiration, to frequent ablution, to hot and cold bathing, will aid the effect of hyoscyamus, of camphor, and of æther, amongst the narcotics; besides these, there are remedies taken from the three classes of the diffusible stimuli; there are, likewise, many plants of which infusions, taken at bed-time, are productive of much good, that have no place in our pharmacopœias; amongst these, the *gratiola officinalis* has considerable influence, and also the *salvia officinalis*, the *salvia æthiopica*, and *verbascum nigrum*. In the works of the celebrated Dr. Franklin you will find a familiar treatise on the art of producing sleep, which is not unworthy your attention.

Great caution is always necessary in the employment of soporifics; there are states of the body in which, however necessary it may be to obtain sleep, yet we cannot have recourse to them without previously preparing the system, and very accurately and minutely weighing all the circumstances. In fevers and acute disease the first favorable symptom that excites our hopes is sleep; upon this sometimes the whole case turns; the patient to whom we had looked with anxious solicitude, for whom we had scarcely dared venture to express an idea that might have induced the friends to entertain a hope, falls into a gentle slumber, his respiration is easy, his skin is moistened and warm; he wakes, as it were, from the brink of the grave, refreshed and recalled to continue his path upon earth, even in a firmer state of health than he was previous to his attack. If this sleep has been naturally obtained, it always forms to us an indication of the utmost value; but if it be artificially produced, although it may have been productive of some apparent good, we cannot calculate upon it as enabling us to form a favorable prognosis, and, indeed, if we cannot keep up the diffusible stimulating system, the reaction is great, and the constitution sinks afterwards more rapidly.

In almost all cases, narcotics must be administered with great caution, and to give them in every stage betokens an ignorance of the effects they produce. To give opium where the tongue is loaded with sordes, is to produce an irritation and an excitement; to give *digitalis* where the tongue is red, is to nauseate and lose the power of relieving by it; sometimes soporifics will diminish every secretion; the insensible perspiration, the saliva, the urine, the bile, will be acted upon, from not having taken

the precaution previous to prescribing, to remove from the *primæ viæ* by gentle laxatives, the accumulated mucus which, covering the surface of the stomach and intestines, prevents the capillary circulation from being healthily carried on.

There are some circumstances which may, at first sight, appear of little moment, but which, I can tell you, from some experience, exert a most extraordinary influence upon your successful administration of soporifics; amongst these I will more particularly notice to you the effect of light. You will find in some diseases, especially in nervous fevers, that if your patient has the stimulus of light, not only will the medicine be inefficacious, but it may, as you will sometimes see, become a source of irritation. It is often necessary that the room in which the sick person is, should be kept in absolute darkness, otherwise a large, and what would be a potent dose, will produce no benefit. In some stages of disease, even the presence of a night-lamp will counteract all the good effect that has been anticipated. I have uniformly found the greatest difference in hospital practice result from the administration of a narcotic during the day, and during the night; in the former case it generally makes the patient fretful and irritable, and the various objects which must of necessity keep up a state of excitement, in a ward, militate strongly against it in the day time.

Quiet is also important; fresh air, but not *cold* air, although the windows should be kept closed; the curtains of the bed should be left open, but not if there is a fire in the room, the flame of which attracts the eye, and such is then the disordered state of the sensorium, that a candle, or glare, will produce all sorts of illusions upon the mind. I have known delirium come on night after night, until the cause was ascertained to be the fire at the foot of the bed, the patient having taken a narcotic draught.

I need, in these days, hardly caution you against the talkativeness of nurses, or their officious zeal in waking the patient from a sweet and refreshing sleep, for the purpose of regularly giving the composing draught. I must, however, not dwell now upon these topics, but hasten on to speak of anodynes.

The first symptom that usually excites the attention of the medical practitioner, as it is that upon which the sufferer most dwells, is pain or disordered sensation, and for that it is that relief is required. But, whenever you are called upon to alleviate pain, you must remember that you do not perform your duty by the administration of a remedy which can produce this effect alone. You are to be aware that pain is the symptom of a disease, and not disease itself, and that, in the greater number of cases, you do not advance one step by giving momentary ease, but, on the contrary, you may do the utmost mischief by masking the disorder, by further debilitating the system, and, besides, you are losing the most valuable opportunity of combating the cause. Again, in some instances, the temporary relief you give adds fuel to the flame, and will afterwards increase the mischief.

You are to examine what other signs or symptoms of disease exist. By combining them and comparing them, you are enabled to arrive at a

conclusion of the nature of the disease, to distinguish it from another, or to form a diagnosis, as it is termed. Were you to administer, during inflammation of the brain or its membranes, where there is acute pain and sleeplessness, a narcotic to obviate both these states, you would do great mischief, by determining still more to the brain, by preventing the proper biliary secretions, and by losing the time of action; for bloodletting, under such circumstances, would produce all the effects which you might vainly seek from the employment of any narcotic.

I need scarcely observe to you that feeling is the most universally diffused of our senses over the frame; it is the most simple and common to every part. In some places it is much more acute than in others, for some tissues are alive to the slightest touch, and are endowed with the greatest sensibility. But the organs that are most susceptible are not those which carry on the great actions of life.

Thus, with regard to the brain itself, which many physiologists consider as the seat of sensation, there is not a single part that has not been impaired or destroyed, without any apparent change in sensation. A number of cases have been collected by Haller fully proving this fact, and, with the exception of that disease of the heart in which its blood-vessels are found to be ossified, called *angina pectoris*, scarcely any pain accompanies some of the most striking diseases of the heart; and, after death, extraneous substances, such as a pin, a bullet, have been found in the heart, producing little or no disordered sensation during life.

Some of the most painful affections to which nature is subjected occur in the urinary organs, and those parts which are subservient to generation; and, fortunately for suffering man, the class of narcotics produces a number of substances which alleviate his pain, although they cannot cure it.

You must learn that there is as great an art in palliating disease as there is in curing it, and that the remedies I am about to speak of to you possess this power in an extraordinary degree; and the medical man who studies these points will possess a most important knowledge, which will be of the greatest service to him. It is a branch of art, I fear, very much neglected. Some individuals do not seem to know that many diseases are incurable, and the consequence is, that they are always attempting an impossibility; they are undermining the still healthy organs, or rashly are terminating existence. It is the duty of every one who practises this profession to study to prolong the life of man to its latest possible hour; and when the cause of disease is too deeply seated, he must teach his patient how he may best diminish the predisposition to it, how he is to avoid the exciting cause, and how best he may remedy the proximate cause.

Beyond a certain point the body is incapable of bearing pain, and nature prevents all further suffering by suspending or by terminating existence; previous to that the nervous system is convulsed, fever is produced, and delirium supervenes. But when the system suffers from a less degree of pain, whatever the organ may be in which it is present, the great sympathetic nerve sooner or later feels the influence; hence loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, and disordered states of the alimen-

tary canal, and of the secretions, are produced. There are accidents to which the body is subject, which occasionally give rise to excruciating and unrelenting pain, for which we vainly seek any remedy, and the suddenness with which life becomes extinct is fortunate for those to whom this calamity occurs.

Ruptures of the stomach, of the gall-bladder, of the urinary bladder, destroy sometimes with immense rapidity, so that the suffering is not intense, but sometimes the patient survives some hours in great agony.

Rupture of the stomach is not of common occurrence, it is generally the result of over-distension combined with efforts to vomit. Chevalier mentions the case of a lad, fourteen years of age, the inner coat of whose stomach was torn in many places, and that of the duodenum was lacerated completely round; he had eat and drank heartily at a Christmas feast, and was attacked with violent and severe vomiting; next morning he said he felt as if the blood in his head was boiling, he was unable to swallow, the pulse became irregular, pressure on the stomach caused excruciating torture; he vomited two pounds of blood the following day previous to his death. Sometimes rupture of the stomach follows great exertion; thus a healthy coal-heaver in this town, whilst attempting to raise a heavy weight, suddenly cried out, clapped his hands to his stomach, drew two deep sighs, and expired. A lacerated hole was found in the stomach large enough to admit the thumb.

Doubtless overwhelming pain has sometimes the principal share in the sudden termination of life, but under ordinary circumstances I do not believe death itself either to be the result of pain, or that in the greater number of instances it is attended with much suffering.

Medical men have been called upon to declare what quantity of pain individuals can endure, and they judge much by the temperament; the fair-haired, blue-eyed, light complexioned person speedily faints after its application, whilst he who is dark, sallow, and black-haired, undergoes spasms, convulsions, fever, debility, and delirium, before nature refuses to give up her powers.

Pain may be acute, dull, aching, throbbing; may be increased by motion, by pressure, by the action of any particular organ; sometimes its limit is very much confined, circumscribed to one spot, or it may be very universally diffused; all these circumstances become indications of the particular remedy to which we are to have recourse.

You must remember that your patient is frequently incapable of referring you to the exact seat of pain, and that sometimes the sensation exists in a part at a considerable distance from the organ that is disordered, and were you to apply your narcotic to the point you would not relieve a single symptom. Thus, where the liver is diseased, the right shoulder is complained of; where a stone exists in the bladder, the top of the urethra sympathizes; where the cells of the lungs and bronchiæ are clogged up with mucus, with pus, and with blood, the cough and uneasy sensations are complained of as affecting the larynx; those who have lost an arm or a leg will not unfrequently complain of the pain in the fingers and toes. I have known a blister applied to the thigh on account of pain and numbness there; and narcotics administered where the

pulse has indicated inflammation; and upon the consequent death, the kidneys have been found gorged with blood, but the acute pain in the back and the state of the pulse had excited no attention in the medical man.

There are great varieties of disordered sensation which, though they are not immediately painful, are sources of the highest degree of irritation and of annoyance; such as soreness, tension, numbness, rawness of parts, fornication, itching; this is sometimes so intolerable as to produce inflammatory fever; it is very frequently caused by various parasitic insects. I have known two cases of individuals, who were so dreadfully annoyed by this plague as almost to find life intolerable; an ointment, the principal ingredient of which is corrosive sublimate, in one instance only allays the suffering; it seems to come on at long intervals, and though it ceases, on the application of the ointment, for some weeks, it still suddenly seizes the person with such intense sensation that he is obliged almost to tear his flesh for relief. In the other instance, hydrocyanic acid, much diluted, effected a permanent cure.

When pain ceases, it must, nevertheless, be an object of your care; in very many instances, it is right for you to ascertain whether this has gradually or suddenly taken place; if in inflammation it has suddenly ceased, you must be aware that it may be from mortification; if accompanied with shivering and sensation of cold, however slight, suppuration may be the result; sometimes, as in rheumatism, the pain in the limbs subsides, but in a day or two the heart, or some other organ, is affected, and this has been called metastasis; but, in many instances, I am persuaded in rheumatism, it is the result of an affection of the coronary vessels that supply the heart with blood, and is produced by too much bleeding; for it seldom, if ever, occurs, where venesection has not taken place.

So that, thoroughly to understand the circumstances under which narcotics are to be administered, besides attending to the age, to the constitution, and to the habits of life of the patient, demands, on the part of the medical man, the most watchful care and patient discrimination.—*London Lancet.*

REMARKS UPON ITINERANTS.

[Communicated for the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal.]

NO. I.—INTRODUCTION.

THIS is an age of improvement, and mankind are progressing rapidly to greater and greater perfection. It would require more time than could be spared from other occupations, even to name all the improvements which have been made, calculated to render this earth a more desirable habitation. The substitution of steam for the less certain and more unstable force of the winds, to propel ships and barges upon oceans, seas, lakes, and rivers, is a valuable discovery. The application of steam to land conveyances, in the propelling of trains of vehicles with the rapidi-

ty of the most accelerated winds, is likewise a valuable improvement upon the former slow method of conveyance.

Discoveries of various kinds are made, and making, which, were they not so common, would be calculated to astonish the human race. It belonged to a Newton and others to discover the distances, the magnitude, and motions of the heavenly bodies; but other persons have discovered some very singular influences of these bodies, which they could not discover. The influences of the conjunctions, the oppositions and other locations of the heavenly bodies in regard to each other, to produce sunshine, storm, drought and inundation, is worth mentioning. The influence of the new moon to produce foul weather when one point of her crescent is lowered, and dry weather when both are upon a level, might be mentioned as a curious discovery. Other discoveries relative to the influences of the moon ought not to be passed over. Farmers have learned to plant potatoes in the wane of the moon, to prevent their running too much to vines; and to sow peas in the new moon, to give them opportunity of having green peas all the season.

Many things have influences upon the weather that the greatest philosophers never could discover. If the sun sets clear after it has passed through a cloud, it will be fair upon the morrow; if it rises clear and soon enters a cloud, it will be foul weather before night. The last Friday of the month governs the weather for the ensuing month; the twelve days of Christmas govern it during the year. If the sternum of the pullet is thick throughout, it will be a hard winter; if its density is unequal, the winter in regard to intensity will be unequal in an exact ratio.

Observations, and signs, and wonders, have imparted knowledge upon a great many things. People have learned to kill their pork when the sea is full, to prevent its shrinking in the pot. If a dog howls when his master is absent, the poor man has had something disastrous befall him; if the kine low in the night time, sickness, or death, or disaster of some kind, will afflict the family. Dreams are made of more substantial materials than cold philosophy believes, and inform us of sickness and death and calamities of various kinds.

Discoveries in regard to the medical art have been made of as great importance as any of these. On this subject it has been discovered that ignorance is the greatest wisdom. So certain are many persons that ignorance is sound philosophy, that they will frown upon you and call you unreasonable if you tell them a learned physician knows more than the itinerant who never studied a fortnight. Practising upon the authority of a recipe cut from a newspaper or an almanac, is more certain to prove successful than from the experienced councils of a Cullen, a Darwin, or an Abernethy. From the days of Hippocrates down, all that has been learned in regard to medicine is mere pretense, falsehood, deception. Indian doctors are sometimes all the toast, and know more than all others. At other times Root doctors know more than everybody else. Now Steam doctors are most in vogue. It was mentioned at the commencement of this essay, that steam had been applied to the purposes of navigation, and to land conveyances. Of late it has been applied to new and before unheard-of purposes. We have latterly

been favored with the advantages of Steam Doctors. Not with doctors propelled by steam—manufactured by the force of steam, but with those who apply steam to the removal of disease. How wonderful! Disorders must all be driven to the moon, or to the fixed stars, if they are propelled with as much rapidity as are the engine and its train of cars upon the rail-road. Surely they will not be permitted to tarry upon our sub-lunary planet any longer. We will see how some of these things are in our future essays.

F.

HYDRIODATE OF POTASH IN RHEUMATISM.

THIS new remedy in rheumatism has been administered with much success by Dr. Elliotson, at the North London Hospital. The following case was related by him in a recent lecture. The running from the nose and redness of the eyes which occurred in this case, are common effects of the medicine if long continued.

Francis Turner, aged 30, was admitted August 10th, under the care of Dr. Elliotson. A married man, manager of a wholesale grocer's business, of healthy family, and of temperate habits. About two years ago he caught cold, and has complained of flying pains all over his body ever since. Has not had gonorrhœa for eleven years. He first felt burning pains in the soles of the feet and heel, the pain then removed to the shoulders. During the day time there was an indescribable pain about the fingers, which afterwards became benumbed. The pains of the soles, feet, and heel, were treated by liniments and leeches. He was under Dr. Haviland of Cambridge, who gave him infusion of bark and calomel, and told him it was rheumatism. The pain afterwards removed to the head and neck; he was then under Dr. Lovett of Royals-ton, who blistered him over the parts affected, and bled him. He was subsequently under Dr. Price of Margate, for almost twelve months. This spring he has been drinking the Buxton waters. As a last resource he flew to the infamous quack pills of Morison, but these, he said, nearly killed him. From other remedies he occasionally obtained temporary relief, but the disease has not been subdued, though he has been rather improving since he left Buxton. His present symptoms are pain in the ankles and heel, and the right one is swollen. Weakness in the wrists and hands; sometimes feels pain on turning his head suddenly round. The right shoulder is very stiff, but not quite fixed, and the pulse is not so well felt at this, as at the other wrist. Tongue rather white; pulse 65, full. Bowels regular. To have four grains of the hydriodate of potash in solution, three times daily; common diet. The next day the dose was increased to five grains, and he says he feels rather better already.

13. Increase the dose to sixteen—still improving.

16. Going on well, increase the dose to seven grains and a half.

Sept. 1. Since the last report the rheumatic pains have been gradually getting less; he has occasionally been troubled with a little cough, and a

running from the nose, and smarting of the eyes. Pitch plaster to the chest.

3. As the last named symptoms still continue, let him decrease the dose to five grains, and let him have a blister to the elbow, as he complains of its being stiff.

29. Has been gradually improving since last report, having continued his medicine in the last named doses. He was discharged perfectly well on the 3d of October.

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BOSTON, JANUARY 25, 1837.

REPORT ON THE THOMSONIAN SYSTEM OF PRACTICE.

IN the course of human events, it appears that a small company of worshippers at the shrine of ignorance in the towns of Pendleton and Abbeville, S. C., not content with being permitted to indulge themselves with the luxuries of the stone bath and liberal potations of decocted cayenne, have fervently besought the legislature of that State to confer upon the idols of their adoration, by the force of law, very distinguished privileges. They pray "that the Thomsonian practitioners of medicine be placed upon an equal footing with the regular faculty, and be allowed to charge for their services." This petition was referred to a committee, whose report has been kindly sent to us. We can only republish a small portion of it, but the extracts will show very satisfactorily how well this monstrous absurdity is understood by men of intelligence in all sections of the union.

"Your Committee would respectfully suggest, that the Thomsonian practice of physic is not founded in a knowledge of the anatomy of the human body, nor of the laws which govern its different functions, either in health or disease. And that any system of practice resting upon any other basis than that of a thorough knowledge of Anatomy, Physiology and Pathology, can never be productive of any great benefit to the community. The duties of a physician in managing the diseases of the human body, have been very justly compared to those of a commanding general in conducting military operations. The body of the afflicted man is likened to an invaded territory; the disease is the enemy, and the physician is the general engaged to resist him. Whilst every one must recognize at a single glance the indispensable importance in the process of military operations of the most minute topographical knowledge, on the part of the commanding general of the invaded country, none will doubt that similar acquaintance with the structure of the human body is equally necessary to the Medical General. Your Committee, therefore, are of opinion that a system of medical practice which dispenses with this all-important preliminary instruction, must stand forever condemned by the common sense of mankind. It involves a pretension scarcely less ridiculous than that of a man who should venture to advertise himself a repairer of watches who had simply learned to count the figures on a

dial-plate, or of the officer of a campaign who on being informed of the death-dealing powers of powder and ball, directs his ordnance against the ramparts of his enemy without making a single inquiry as to the point where they could be most successfully assailed. Your Committee conceive that it is a glaring absurdity to suppose that any system of practice of medicine can be used to advantage which is not founded in a thorough knowledge of the anatomy of the human body and of the laws which govern it both in health and disease. From the complex structure and diversified action of the different parts of the human system, and from the fact that most of the derangements with which the physician has to contend are *internal*, it is obvious that to enable him to have a rational conception both of the kind and degree of the derangement, and of the best mode of restoring the parts to a healthy condition, and at the same time to understand the *modus operandi* of the medicines used, he must have a knowledge of the parts involved in the disease."

With reference to the pharmaceutical attainments of the practitioners of this system, the Committee remark :—

" Their only crucible is the human stomach, and their only test of the healing or destructive powers of their remedies, the consequent injury or improvement, the life or death, of the patient. Are not these considerations amply sufficient to show how utterly futile it is to expect anything like general success from a system of practice where these requisitions are wanting? How then do these requisitions compare with the Thomsonian system of practice? Thomson, the reputed author of the system, was doubtless ignorant of anatomy, physiology and chemistry.

" Nothing is required to initiate the most ignorant man in the community into all the mysteries of their practice, except the procurement of a patent, a little light reading on the medicinal properties of a few plants, and the several combinations of their medicines, together with a great deal of abuse of science and of scientific men. Thus armed, and with no other qualifications, they step forth and ask to be placed upon a footing of equality with the regular faculty and be allowed to charge for their services."

After a series of logical deductions, touching the utter worthlessness of the whole system, which is without *system* or *common sense*, the report adds :—

" Your Committee are of opinion, therefore, that unless the Legislature is prepared to decide that all learning is a humbug, and that the pretender has a right to equality with the man of science, the prayer of the petitioners cannot be granted.

" We cannot admit the possibility, that any such mushroom system as that of Thomson's Practice, which sprang up in darkness, and is inevitably doomed to wither and perish when exposed to light, can ever win favor with this enlightened Legislature, and be permitted on an equality with that scientific system of practice, which is founded on a knowledge of anatomy, physiology, and pathology, and which has been maturing for the last twenty centuries, and has received contributions from some of the most enlightened and brilliant minds of every age."

Were it convenient to insert the whole report, we are sure it would be well received. The petitioners, however, who consider themselves persecuted for righteousness sake, in common with their brethren of the same class in other States, are never discouraged; they continue to hope

for a return of the dark ages, and seem to believe that by multiplying ignoramuses, they shall ultimately triumph over the sunshine of literature and science.

Medical Lectures.—Most of the schools have brought their lecture terms nearly to a close. As far as they have been heard from, through correspondents, they have all been prosperous and well attended. Facilities for anatomical pursuits are every where given, as the case must be in every intelligent community. Where the legislature punishes those whom it declares shall be well educated in the knowledge of the human frame, before being allowed to prescribe for the ills of the living, as felons, the profession cannot advance, nor operate to the greatest physical and moral good of the people. Happily for the age, those prejudices which once were so formidable, that to have dissected a subject would have consigned the physician who was known to have done it, to infamy, have been overcome, with a few solitary exceptions. An occasional monument of the olden time, in the form of an antique magistrate, sometimes manifests a disposition to assert the majesty of the law, by way of reminding the world of their existence. But in Massachusetts, for a certainty, there can be no motive for violating any enactment of the legislature in relation to this subject. The liberality and fostering care extended to the medical profession are worthy of all acknowledgment and praise.

Mortality in 1836.—In Baltimore, the total number of deaths, according to a recently published bill of mortality, was 2373. According to the census of 1830, the population of that city was 80,990; of which 18,907 were colored persons—14,783 being free, and 4,124 held in slavery. The oldest white person who died last season, had reached the advanced age of 112; and the oldest colored person, a female, had attained to 120 years! Eight females who died there in 1836, had each lived over a century—a good comment on the healthfulness of the city. Of consumption, 316 died, being the greatest mortality by any one disease. There were 181 still births; 191 by cholera infantum; 83 of bilious fever; 30 of scarlet, 77 of catarrhal, and 41 of typhus fevers. By unknown infantile maladies, 478; suicide, 10; intemperance, 50; and by old age, 137. August was remarkable for the greatest number of interments, there having been 377. June was strictly the most exempt from sickness, although there were 133 deaths in that month.

In Warwick, Mass. the number of deaths, in 1836, was ten—population 1150. Only one death to 115 persons.

The number of deaths in New York, the last year, was 8009, being 927 more than in 1835. One thousand five hundred and fourteen, nearly one fifth of the whole, were caused by consumption.

The number of interments in the town of Lynn, Mass., containing about 10,000 inhabitants, was 185 during the year 1836.

In West Hartford, Ct., the number of deaths was 17—two less than during the preceding year.

Power of Galvanism.—A paragraph is going the rounds, said to have been extracted from a late foreign Journal, but which, however, we cannot

find in any of our exchange favors, which describes the restoration of speech, taste and hearing, in a Polish officer who had been deprived of them ever since the battle of Astroleuka, in consequence of an unexpected discharge of cannon. The concussion was so tremendous as to throw him down; and although there was not the slightest external wound, when he recovered himself he found that two of his senses, viz. taste and hearing, as well as the power to articulate words, were utterly gone. All the eminent physicians of Vienna had made trial of their skill to restore the loss, but ineffectually. Being finally conveyed to Paris, the advice of M. Magendie was sought. He applied the galvanic fluid to the tympanum, and by that means speedily overcame the deafness. On the third trial of the galvanic action, the officer began to perceive the returning sense of taste. This is all that is worth republishing about the matter, till our information is derived from an unquestionable source.

Animal Magnetism.—M. Poyen performed something very astonishing the other day, in the presence of several of the most distinguished physicians and literati of Boston. As the exhibition was of an extraordinary character, we rely upon the kindness of some gentleman to furnish us with the particulars.

Medical Miscellany.—The Commissioners appointed last year by the Legislature of New York, to select a suitable site for a State Lunatic Asylum, have not yet reported. The geological survey of the same State has progressed during the last year.—Dr. Hüllihen, of Wheeling, Virginia, performed a fine operation a little time since on a double harelip, and at the same time took away a projecting point of bone growing from the palate, which extended beyond the nose—where the end was capped with a fleshy pad, in which two teeth were located.—There has been considerable alarm in consequence of the rumored existence of the smallpox, in Dayton, Ohio.—Dr. Taylor, an English oculist, for his good professional services in Egypt, has been raised to the distinction of a Bey.—Santini, the great Italian singer, recently died of a liver complaint.—The indulgence of a musical taste has been thought conducive to long life. Handel died at 75; Haydn at 76; Burney at 88; and Alcock at 91 years.—Thirty-seven gentlemen of the medical class received the degree of M.D. at the late Commencement of the Berkshire Medical Institution.—Hahnemannism has excited warm discussions at the late meetings of the London Medical Society. Dr. Johnson, editor of the *Medico-Chirurgical Review*, and Dr. Whiting, President of the Society, oppose the doctrine, which is advocated by Dr. Uwins and others. At the meeting of the 24th of October, Dr. Johnson informed the members that if Hahnemannism was again introduced he should leave the Society; whereupon Dr. Uwins said he would leave it, and accordingly walked out.—The lectures of M. Broussais, on Phrenology, recently delivered at the University of Paris, are reported at length in the *London Lancet*.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.—Cruden's communication came too late for this week. An interview with the writer is requested, as his manuscript, written with a pencil, is so nearly obliterated in several places that we cannot understand it.

DIED,—In Woburn, Mass. Dr. Sylvanus Plympton, aged 79.—At West Scituate, Mass. Dr. David Bailey, aged 57.

Whole number of deaths in Boston for the week ending January 21, 55. Males, 17—females, 18.

Worms, 1—convulsions, 1—lung fever, 3—measles, 4—infantile, 3—quinsey, 1—disease of spine, 1—old age, 1—dropsy on the brain, 2—consumption, 7—marasmus, 1—bowel complaint, 1—dropsy, 1—croup, 2—apoplexy, 1—decay of nature, 1—paralytic, 1—inflammation of the brain, 1—stillborn, 2.

PROLAPSUS UTERI CURED BY EXTERNAL APPLICATION.

DR. A. G. HULL'S UTERO-ABDOMINAL SUPPORTER is offered to those afflicted with *Prolapsus Uteri*, and other diseases depending upon relaxation of the abdominal muscles, as an instrument in every way calculated for relief and permanent restoration to health. When this instrument is carefully and properly fitted to the form of the patient, it invariably affords the most immediate immunity from the distressing "dragging and bearing down" sensations which accompany nearly all visceral displacements of the abdomen, and its skilful application is always followed by an early confession of radical relief from the patient herself. The Supporter is of simple construction, and can be applied by the patient without further aid. Within the last two years 700 of the Utero Abdominal Supporters have been applied with the most happy results.

The very great success which this instrument has met, warrants the assertion, that its examination by the Physician will induce him to discard the disgusting pessary hitherto in use. It is gratifying to state, that it has met the decided approbation of every member of the Medical Faculty who has applied it, as well as every patient who has worn it.

The Subscribers having been appointed agents for the sale of the above instruments, all orders addressed to them will be promptly attended to. Price, \$10.

LOWE & REED, Boston; DAVID KIMBALL, Portsmouth, N. H.; JOSHUA DURGIN, Portland, Me.; JOSEPH BALCH, Jr., Providence, R. I.; ELISHA EDWARDS, Springfield, Mass.; N. S. WORDEN, Bridgeport, Conn. Oct. 5—6m

MEDICAL TUITION.

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The terms are, \$100 per annum; to be paid in advance.

Boston, October, 1835.

June 15—eoptf

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Nov. 30.

MARSHALL S. PERRY, M.D.
AUGUSTUS A. GOULD, M.D.
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HENRY G. WILEY, M.D.

TO MEDICAL STUDENTS.

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Franklin Street, Nov. 9, 1836.

N16—tf

JOHN JEFFRIES, M.D.
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Boston, Oct. 7, 1836.

tf—Oct. 19

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